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INFO RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 3680
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SUBJECT: ANOTHER WAVE OF OPTIMISM ON CABINET FORMATION

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) In the wake of a flurry of activity, including a visit by caretaker Telecommunications Minister Gebran Bassil to Damascus, the Lebanese political class seems convinced once again that a new cabinet will be formed in the next few days.

Nader Hariri, advisor to Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri, told us the morning of November 6 that although Change and Reform bloc head Michel Aoun had not yet replied formally, sources in the opposition reported that he would accept Hariri's latest offer. According to Nader, the offer consisted of the telecoms ministry (without Bassil as minister), the energy ministry (with Bassil as minister), the industry ministry, the tourism ministry, and one minister without portfolio. MP Alain Aoun told us shortly afterward that his uncle Michel Aoun had accepted Hariri's proposal. Nader emphasized that -- aside from receiving Aoun's official notification -- the PM-designate still needed to obtain the names of the ministers that each party would like to designate, and to consult with his allies before presenting his cabinet line-up to President Michel Sleiman.

12. (U) According to article 64 of the Lebanese constitution, Hariri and his new cabinet would assume caretaker status as soon as Hariri and President Sleiman jointly sign the decree approving its formation. The cabinet would then be allotted 30 days to develop a ministerial statement and obtain parliamentary approval for it. The cabinet would attain full governing status with the parliamentary vote approving the statement.

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